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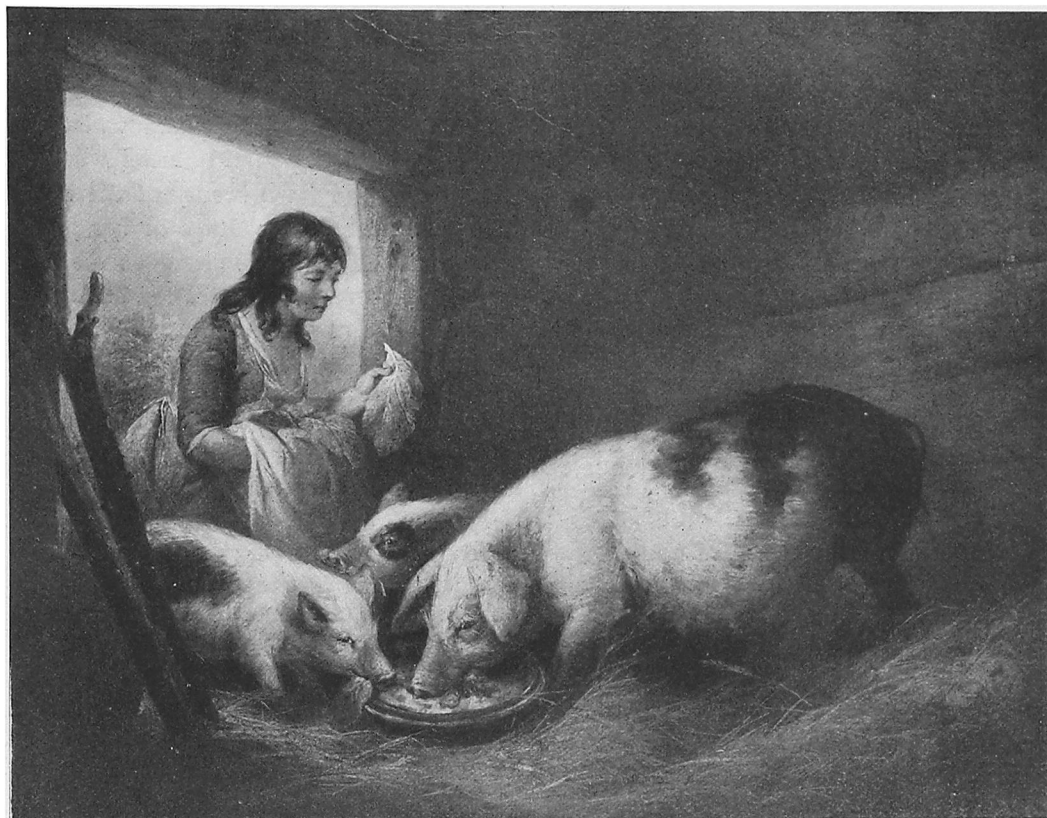


PORTRAIT OF LADY INCHQUIN (AFTERWARDS MARCHIONESS OF THORMOND)

By Sir Thomas Lawrence

—Courtesy Arthur Ackermann & Son

—Acquired from the collection of Lord Desborough



GIRL FEEDING PIGS
By George Morland
Courtesy Arthur Ackermann & Son

—Purchased from the Right Honorable the Earl of
Moray of Kintfauns Castle, Scotland, who in-
herited it from Baroness Gray

Exhibitions at Chicago Galleries

By THE EDITOR

AT the beginning of the war collectors looked for a flooding of the American market with hoarded art treasure from European palace and English manor house. Everyone argued that great families would be impoverished or cut off and their ancestral collections sold under the hammer of the auctioneer. Everyone looked for a complete eclipse of the interest in art under the black cloud of war.

As with the stock market or a horse race no one was prepared for what has actually happened. Instead of flooding the American market, foreign art treasures of real

worth have become all but unobtainable. The dangers of the sea alone would deter their possessors from incurring the risk of their loss in most cases. Then, too, instead of a falling off in the demand for art in European centers there has been an actual stampede by the people who have recently acquired fortunes through war activities to get possession of anything good which comes onto the market. Even from Vienna and Berlin this astounding report trickles out and in Paris and London we know that these conditions prevail. London, particularly, is enjoying a great demand for pic-

tures, pianos, fine furniture, everything that goes to complete a fine home.

It is therefore an event worthy of note when a collection of really remarkable old English pictures is shown on this side of the water at this time and especially in Chicago, for the New York buyer is usually offered the first opportunity with such things. The early depression of the first period of the war abroad is responsible for the bringing of these canvases to America and, no doubt, the present depression of business in this country, just following our entrance into the war may explain their presence in Chicago.

Certain it is that so many works of such remarkable importance as are now on exhibition at the galleries of Arthur Ackermann & Son have not been seen together here before and will not likely be on view again. The great English portrait period is represented with four most choice examples in a state of perfect preservation, and there are a number of old landscapes also such as delight the connoisseur.

Of the portraits that of Lady Inchiquin, afterwards Marchioness of Thormond, is perhaps the most absorbing. This is a really famous Sir Thomas Lawrence which is well known to print collectors as having been engraved in mezzotint by Richard Smythe. This canvas was acquired from the collection of Lord Desborough and found its way to our shores since the war. It came from one of the famous old castles of Ireland and shows us a titled beauty of the early nineteenth century garbed in the simple white muslin affected at that time, her head adorned with a turban of white gauze striped in bronze which fashion is reminiscent of Napoleon's Egyptian campaign. Its ends stream down over her shoulders and knotted carelessly about her slender waist is a girdle of lovely blue. The brown tones of the landscape and trees, with a glimpse of the rich blue of heaven seen through their foliage, the rich cream-white of the frock and turban and the

plaster wall at the back of the figure are simple enough as to color scheme. Yet the effect is indescribably rich and satisfying, suggesting great brilliance and variety of color. Everything in this mellow setting plays up to the fresh beauty of the lady's face and the sapphire deeps of her jewel-like eyes. These eyes indeed are the very soul of the entire work. They haunt one and are not to be forgotten. What unfathomable possibilities of passion, grief, rage and ineffable tenderness we feel in the intensity of that clear blue gaze. Here was a woman of character, personality, emotion, of love, ambition and hate, a good friend and a dangerous enemy and, withal, a beauty of undeniable charm. Despite the fact that Lawrence, in accordance with the gallant manner of his school, has played tenderly over the features of his sitter carefully omitting any suggestion of the lines, or shadows left by time, one still feels in the firm set of the lady's lips a certain conviction of maturity. One wonders indeed if there ever was or will be a better way of painting fair ladies than is this, for it presents all of the essential facts of physiognomy and character, yet fitting them into the decorative purposes of a figure, that has all the grace of woman in the abstract. Surely there is something consistent about a man's painting the portrait of a society woman with the reserve and courtesy which he maintains toward her in society: "To Caesar the things that are Caesar's" and to the artificial beauty of of an artificial atmosphere all of the grace and illusion of her artifices. An interesting detail of the picture is the classic female figure lightly indicated upon the wall as though a part of a fresco. It somehow suggests the inspiration of all the fashion, grace and art of the day and, though most cunningly subordinated to the general theme and kept well in the background, it takes off from the blankness of the wall and is a significant motif. This is an unusual Lawrence in that it is

one of a very few of his paintings of women that does not show parted on a classic brow the lovely dark waving hair over those shadows and highlights his brush was wont to dwell so lovingly. Lady Inchiquin is an ash blonde, her light curls escaping in a soft fringe under her turban.

The rich and wonderful gradations of brown, the toned white which the values indicate, has always been warm even before the aging process gave such depth to its ivory, the subtle character of all the tones and the absence of any solid color, all bespeak a master of the old school at its best.

Of a very different type but none the less charming is the Lady Stracham of Francis Cotes, R. A. This picture was painted probably about 1750 for it is in Cote's best manner and he died in 1770 while still a fairly young man. Here is the soft, gentle, passive type of woman, the feminine ideal of her day and generation. She has the wonderfully sloping shoulders that were the despair of our grandmothers' ambitions and she radiates a delicacy which, though innate, has, nevertheless, been brought to complete flower through intensive cultivation. Her gown of lovely ash rose with its full undersleeves of white muslin and gracefully knotted sash of blue, gold striped, has a Parisian hint for all its simplicity and assumed carelessness. Her dark hair is effectively twined with pearls and a rope of these exquisite gems encircle the slender throat. She leans her dainty weight on the arm which rests upon the cloth-draped table and her expression is amiable, mildly alert and pleasing. Lord Oxford, in commenting on the career of Cotes, makes much mention of his portraits in crayon which he likens to those of Rosalba who was most eminent in this line at the time. Cotes was a master of both oil and crayon portraiture, one of the first members of the Royal Academy and a member of the Incorporated Society of Artists. Among his most famous works

are a portrait of Admiral Lord Hawke at Greenwich Hospital, and a group of Mr. and Mrs. Joah Bates in possession of the Sacred Harmonic Society.

For contrast we turn to the portrait of Charles Lynd by John Opie, a fashionable portrait painter of his period who preferred men as subjects and rather despised descending to the flattery of women which was at that time so prevalent in art. His style is distinguished by ideality, truth and dignity and he was commissioned to paint many historical subjects. In his portraits he very generally employed landscape backgrounds as here, being thus far at least well in accord with the ideals of his day. This is a very rich and solid piece of painting, with wonderful subtleties in the whites of the powdered wig and the textures of the black velvet collar. The rosy flesh tones and the blue eyes seem as bright and fresh as if painted but recently so complete is the state of preservation in which this old portrait still exists. A shadow on the upper lip suggests a dark moustache though the powdered wig and blue eyes give the impression of a fair man. Full of character and life this canvas is still a good piece of decoration, the finished expression of a master of portraiture.

The remaining portrait of the collection, that of the three children of the famous engineer, Sir Richard Arkwright, is by Joseph Wright of Derby, and was painted about 1770. It came out of the collection of Lindsell Hall and is an historic canvas, a companion to the portrait of Sir Richard himself which is now in the National Gallery. This great engineer was one of the early inventors who experimented with steam as applied to transportation and Joseph Wright seems to have been his favorite painter through whose art he wished to be immortalized to posterity.

The group of children is, of course, an intimate work intended for the home and it gives every evidence of being faithful to their features and childish charms. The

colors are very lively, with a loveliness that seems a bit overstrained, yet is not without its quaint charm. The painting of a white lace bodice over pink satin on the first figure of the oldest girl has occupied the artist considerably, in fact, we feel that he has carefully reproduced every beloved detail of holiday costumes, to please the little folk, as well as of childish faces and figures so dear to their elders. Altogether the thing has been well done and the grouping, which is a difficult feat in itself, has been nicely handled. The colors are very fresh and well preserved causing one to marvel at their purity.

One of George Morland's celebrated barnyard idyls is also included in this collection. A buxom country lass is seen through the door of the barn handing green feed to two pigs which occupy the foreground. These animals, the barn interior and the straw are remarkably well painted and the drawing throughout is of Morland's best. The girl is a pleasing study against the blue background of the sky and the entire work has that homely quaint charm that this artist was so successful in imparting to such scenes. It has toned a bit with age and that most delightfully. This canvas is historical as having been exhibited in the famous assemblage of old masters at Burlington House in 1875. It came out of the collection of the Right Honorable, the Earl of Morey of Kinfauns Castle, who had inherited it from Baroness Grey.

It was very greatly admired upon its exhibition in 1875 and the Burlington House catalog number, 216, is still on the back of the frame. Its splendid state of preservation and the fact that it represents one of the greatest and most characteristic achievements of a master who has never before or since been equaled as an interpreter of country life render this a most valuable art treasure.

Of landscapes the largest and most important now to be seen at Ackermann's is

"Boulogne Beach" by J. B. Pyne. This artist was born about twenty years later than Turner and so was a young man in the latter's prime. One feels the influence of Turner strongly in this picture. He possesses the same faculty of color and indulges in the same wide prospects and lofty skies with wreathing luminous vapor veils. Pyne is, however, more restrained and more intelligible than Turner was at all times, working more for objectivity as well as color luminosity. In this particular scene we have a low flat beach at sunset with the tide out. The dying orb of day is of whitish gold and all its far-flung radiance is ashen. There is a dissolving feeling about the light and the sky and waters. The bulk of an old ship looms grey and phantomlike at the water's edge and there are some exquisitely painted small figures in the middle distance and an interesting tangle of fishing equipment in the left foreground. Here, too, is a curious note in the picture, a touch of warm reddish and brown tones and shadows that are typical of the old school. Eliminating this one corner of the picture is like many high-keyed luminous modern works of today. While the handling is not broad it is still not cramped and one feels that his art was progressing toward that of our time. Except for the patch of brown before referred to otherwise his shadows are cool and something about this corner suggests that it may have been a concession to the views of his day. This note is introduced in such a way as to give emphasis to the design and arrangement of the work and so is not obtrusive. Pyne is represented in the South Kensington Museum with his "Bay of Naples" and three other canvases. He always chose an expansive view for his landscapes and had a decided penchant for the water side, particularly the sea.

David Cox, one of whose small canvases is in this collection had much the same feeling for sky. Oils by this artist are indeed few and far between for most of his work



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was done in water color. He belongs to the Turner period, 1783-1859, and studied under William Mueller. His best work was done in water color and he is represented in many large collections and great public galleries of England. Forty-two of his drawings were bequeathed to the British Museum and there are twenty-two of his works in South Kensington. Special exhibitions of them are also held from time to time in these great museums. He painted, in all, about one hundred oils and of these "The Setting Sun," now at Ackermann's is a fine example. It is full of luminosity and poetry, seems, in fact, to swim in light and,

though small, its faraway perspective renders it one of those "big little" pictures. The light is golden and the colors of the figures and foreground rich and there is a great feeling of the passing of time and event about it.

Altogether the galleries at Ackermann's offer one a rare opportunity just now to study the art of the early nineteenth century and contrast it with the achievements of today. Even allowing for the spell of the antique there is a something noble and fine about these pictures which might constitute a worthy inspiration to the art of all time.